DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 112 962 JC 750 513

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TITLE Foreign Study and the Community College.
PUB DATE [75]
NOTE 23p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS Advisory Committees; College Cooperation; Community Colleges; Followup Studies; *Junior Colleges; Post Secondary Education; Program Length; *School Surveys; *Study Abroad; Transfer Policy; *Travel

ABSTRACT

In order to examine the status of foreign study in American junior and community colleges, a questionnaire was developed and distributed to 225 institutions in the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, eliciting an 80 percent level of response. Duplicate questionnaires were sent to Academic Affairs and Student Affairs offices in each of the community colleges polled. Results indicated that more than 50 two-year institutions in the survey region are in some measure involved in foreign study activity. Unfortunately, few community colleges engage in follow-up studies on students who take part in such programs, which hinders further programmatic development. Community colleges, unlike many senior institutions, tend to provide short-term programs abroad (under eight weeks). Most community colleges stated that foreign programs were "organized and administered by the institution in cooperation with private travel agencies." This plan seems to explain the decided travel rather than foreign study character of many community college programs, which tends to cause credit transferral problems with receiving senior institutions. The development of college-wide advisory committees and more interinstitutional cooperation between community colleges are recommended. (NHM)

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FOREIGN STUDY AND THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

John Franklin White

In the years following World War II, America's colleges and universities picked up the challenge of international responsibility by developing foreign study programs. By the mid-sixties hardly a college or university wanted to be left out of this prestigious opportunity. Called *me-too thinking* by some, and the answer to world problems by others, the growth of this type of academic programming was constant. The late 60's saw cutbacks and outright cancellation of various forms of federal support for international study and exchange, and institutions that had to deal with harsh economic realities and dwindling enrollments also had to reconsider international directions—and these have never held high priority in American education. Today, the mid-seventies provide the prospect of well-ensconced and well-intentioned, if somewhat reduced programs for foreign study.

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The case for foreign study in American community colleges provides a new chapter. Until comparatively recent times, community colleges have generally left the development of foreign study opportunities to senior institutions. As a consequence little has been written about this important educational option. This study furnishes a response to this absence of material with an explanation of the status of foreign study in a representative group of American junior and community colleges—those accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. The investigation covered most of the basic procedural areas of foreign study development--namely *organization, curricula, staffing, operations, transportation,* and *evaluation*. Questionnaires were developed and distributed to 225 institutions, and there was an 80% level of response. Both the academic and the student affairs sides of the community college organizational coin were consulted and this proved important in the accumulation of reliable data.[1] Results indicated that more than 50 two-year institutions accredited by the North Central Association are in some measure involved in foreign study activity. What follows is an examination of survey findings with an attempt to construct a useful current picture. Perhaps the observations and judgments made will be helpful in understanding the important

[1]Duplicate questionnaires were sent to *Academic Affairs* and *Student Affairs* in each of the community colleges polled. This was done to glean as much information as possible from each institution, and to assist in locating the best and most appropriate respondent.

issues raised for foreign study in a junior or community college context.

I. AVAILABLE STUDY ABROAD DATA

A strong relevant factor in the study was that community colleges, not unlike senior institutions, are hard put to find or assemble data on the number of students participating in foreign study options. Community colleges cooperating in the study estimated that numbers of participating students rarely exceeded 50 in any one year, and most placed the figure at 25 or below. But institutions generally do not develop or keep data on students who have gone abroad, whether with their own programs, or those developed in concert with other institutions. The impact of this general failure in record keeping not only hinders follow-up studies in a broad range of foreign study activities, but also opposes effective evaluation of the experience as well as the utilization of the experience in the college's planning for future programs.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF "OPERATIONS" IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Because the study brought focus to community colleges, many interesting comparisons can be made with operational activities in senior institutions. In many cases there are marked contrasts.

A. Scheduling

Scheduling and length or duration of projected programs revealed several departures from norms established by senior institutions. The period of greatest foreign study activity for community college students proved to be the summer following their first year of enrollment. Periods almost as active, however, were the "interim" spring terms of both the first and second year of residence in those institutions with variable or non-traditional academic calendars.

B. Length of Program

It is significant that community colleges, unlike many senior institutions, choose to provide short-term programs abroad. Few institutions responding to the survey listed programs which exceed eight weeks in length, and most were no more than six weeks duration.

C. Transportation

Community colleges surveyed were quick to point out they are

"not in the travel agency business." Strongly apparent from the study, however, is that colleges do not hesitate to go to local agencies (often under "bid" arrangements) in an effort to nail down the basic logistical support needed to get a group of students from one place to another. Institutions listed flights to various points in South America and Europe, and although many of these options originate as travel as opposed to study, the line between these two areas grows hazy in a community college setting, and fewer distinctions are made. What seems obvious from the survey is that although some community colleges will strike for a program of shared transportation with area senior institutions, most tend to "go it alone," and few turn to any of the exchange associations.

D. Course Variations

Roughly half of the respondents stated their programs were part of their regular course offerings, and so listed them in their yearly college catalog. Reading assignments, term papers, field trips, and examinations are the chief learning devices or systems for evaluation. Also listed were day books or journals, and group activities arranged for by foreign academic officials. The great majority of institutions encouraged, but did not require, foreign

language preparation. One institution stated that if the country to which the student wishes to travel had a language requirement the student was supposed to fill the requirement or take a language training course offered by established schools such as the Experiment in International Living.

E. Independent Study

Survey results indicate independent or individualized study opportunities exist in roughly half of the institutions responding, and that provisions exist for the application of such study in a foreign study context. It is also apparent initiation of foreign study programs is often accompanied by, or follows, the inauguration of independent study opportunities in other academic contexts. Honors programs, for example, to the extent they are on the increase in the community college setting, complement the growth of foreign study opportunities.

F. Credit Assignment

The problem of credit assignment, a common concern for community college students, is most frequently taken up by the college registrar or admissions officer on a procedural basis. The development of policy which governs the assignment of credits for foreign study,

however, falls to individual academic departments and curriculum committees. The collegiate officer in charge of instruction, in most cases a dean or vice-president, also assumes an important role in resolving credit assignment and transfer questions. The principle difficulties in credit transfer were judged in various ways, but most had to do with: 1) the assessment or evaluation of the actual learning experience credited, and 2) in relating foreign study options to program or course requirements on the home campus in a satisfactory manner. Establishing the scope or breadth of credits available also depended on the identification of a basic core of knowledge in each travel study option.

G. Program Leadership

The assessment of program leadership drew varied responses. Community colleges generally determine competency in leadership or program direction through a combination of acts, judgments, and exercises. These most often included follow-up sessions of faculty and students, final reports, evidences of student growth, evaluations by students, and judgments by college administration. The attempts to evaluate program leadership and direction thus draw input from a variety of college sectors.

III. ADVISORY PROGRAM COMMITTEES

It is apparent that the great majority of community colleges do not make use of advisory committees for foreign study development purposes. This is not surprising for two main reasons: 1) advisory committee operations, i.e. committees which would guide and advise program directors or coordinators, are not widespread in community colleges, and 2) knowledgeable "foreign study-oriented" faculty are not found in great numbers on junior college campuses. These conditions are understandable in view of the fact that foreign study/research/curriculum development opportunities have only recently appeared on the list of professional opportunities available for community college faculty. One may assume that such grants as those offered by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Humanities, and intended for community college faculty, are also intended in part to "correct" governmental grant deficiencies in the past. There are others, but it remains that the term "Fulbright Scholarship" and all that it symbolizes is still beyond the reach of college faculty expectations outside four-year or graduate institutions.

In the case of advisory assistance from the community, there are few well-defined or established operations. It may well be in the character of the modern comprehensive community college to try to

utilize community resource assistance wherever and whenever available, but such is apparently not the general case in foreign study activity. Only a few institutions surveyed stated they made use of volunteer assistance from outside the academic community. But in those few colleges where non-academic or community personnel were utilized, there were many areas of cooperation. Non-academic personnel were employed as tour conductors and orientation leaders, and community professionals and faculty from neighboring colleges were involved in program planning, operation, and follow-up. Former students with international experience, no longer regularly enrolled as students, were also asked to assist in promotion and development.

IV. PROMOTION AND PUBLICITY

The problem of promotion and publicity appears wherever foreign study activities exist. Community colleges generally agree that the most effective means of promotion is "word of mouth," but information disseminated by program-related faculty seems the next most effective manner. Effective communication with possibilities, including college newspapers, radio, posters, newsletters, catalogs, and brochures. But if there are no insurmountable problems in developing a means for informing students, difficulties arise in "centralizing" or developing a focus for these activities. Roughly half of the institutions responding

stated that various campus offices sponsor special events or activities to promote foreign study. In no instance was a central office identifiable solely for foreign study activity. When "promotional" activities are carried as an occasional responsibility by an individual office, the activities listed in order of highest frequency include: press releases, speeches by staff, orientation programs, forums or workshops, and the use of foreign students in a resource capacity. Less than half of the responding institutions replied that they maintain a "library" of work, study or travel publications. Those institutions which possess sizeable amounts of related materials are able to address many student inquiries. There is little evidence that institutions call upon, or refer questions to, any of the major exchange organizations, i.e. the Council on International Educational Exchange, or the International Institute of Education.

V. PROGRAM ASSESSMENT

Nearly half of the community colleges with foreign study programs state they engage in some type of academic debriefing or post-program assessment. Methods vary, but examinations and term papers are high on the list, and questionnaires, discussion periods, and seminars are also included. When queried as to factors which hinder or confuse the development or operation of a program, colleges list a broad range of categories. But evaluation itself remains a key hindrance, either in terms of judging the reliability of the study program, or in terms of

being able to deal adequately with the problems of internal accreditation. Problems of an economic nature also exist, and these include the lack of sustaining financial aid, and increases in youth fares and costs of travel arrangements. One institution states that internal opposition is raised by "traditional" departments in matters of full-time equivalent student departments in matters of full-time equivalent student accountability. But with a broad range of evaluative or accountability measures, community colleges list specific steps which could be taken to establish the merit of a program:

1. Meetings of involved instructors;
2. follow-up meetings of participating students;
3. discussion with representative from the foreign school;
4. experience from previous student visitation;
5. on the spot observation;
6. instructor's discretion;
7. adequacy of the program as related to cost per student;
8. reputation of the foreign institution involved;
9. teacher or tour guide's previous travel/study experience to the country involved;
10. referral from other institutions;

11. printed reference material;

12. on sight faculty person;

13. evaluation made during the program by the coordinator;

14. character, nature of the foreign countries.

VI. THE FINANCIAL PICTURE

Financial support, the bugaboo of many non-traditional academic efforts, is a common concern for all community colleges. In this connection, most institutions assert that student participation depends on student ability to assume most of the costs. Very few institutions provide a program of financial aid for international study, and these make course tuition possible through scholarship aid or student loans. Less than half of the institutions which responded receive direct funds from budgeted college sources. A similar number of respondents express the view that "indirect funding" such as space, telephones, and office assistance is available for assistance in the administration of foreign study programming. Very few academic offices state they seek public or private support in the planning and operation of foreign study programs. In most cases, funds generated by international study activity go to a "general fund or income pool" and in those few cases where profits are generated, the extra amounts are used for scholarships or general coverage of expenses. Some amounts are allowed to

revert to the ongoing programs. In those cases where financial losses are incurred by international program activity, the needed balances are paid by the college.

Community colleges were also asked to comment on current national trends in international student travel, namely enlarged services due to increased demands for information, and also demands for programs of shorter duration. In this respect, colleges acknowledge the new emphasis, but confirm that lack of available financial assistance is a drawback. Short-term study programs seem to be the most efficient or utilitarian, owing to student body characteristics (working, career-oriented students who must gear a foreign study program to their own schedules), or academic calendars. Several institutions gear their Winterim or mid-year term to allow for manageable study programs abroad. Perhaps the comment received from a community college in Illinois offers the representative revelation: *The services offer low-cost opportunities for career oriented students; this may be a one-in-a-lifetime chance for a student to travel abroad before committing himself to his career. Financial difficulties would be a prime consideration for most students at our community college.*

VII. CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION: A COMMON PROGRAM OBJECTIVE

Community colleges, like senior institutions, voice a strong concern for the problems of crosscultural or intercultural communication. The emphasis usually takes two forms: 1) a concern for the culture and existing international relations status of the country to be visited, and 2) a concern for any problems which might arise within the student's experience. Most colleges express the view that cross-cultural communication is at the center of the foreign study activity, and is perhaps the main objective of such programs. In nearly all cases attention is given to cross-cultural communication during the briefing, planning, or orientation sessions with students, and a few institutions attempt to anticipate potential problems with students as early as the selection process or interview. Community colleges also polled to express whether they perceive any "social or psychological effects of the cross-cultural encounter on participating students." The various replies are interesting enough singly, and collectively they underscore the value of student awareness of other societies or cultures. Replies include the following:

Probably the most valuable single aspect of foreign study;

Students are deeply impressed by economic differences, foreign values, and cultural styles;

Gives knowledge of reality, with opportunities for growth, confrontation, and rejection;

Makes students aware of the greatness of our country, our cultural inheritance from others;

Broadens personal perspective;

Effects are immeasurable;

A comment which has been repeated more than once has been to the effect, "I have never realized how little some people need to live on, and how lucky I was to have so much," with the consequent resolve to work harder and maintain and try to share that higher standard of living with the peoples of other nations;

Depends on student's background;

Short-term experiences provide little trauma.

VIII. PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-INSTITUTIONAL PROGRAMS

The dearth of active foreign study programs at community colleges leads many students to participate in programs of other junior or senior institutions. In most cases, arrangements are made with nearby institutions, and the reasons offered in order of highest frequency include the diversity of available programs elsewhere, the relative ease or promise of obtaining transfer credits, and the attraction of non-traditional models.

PROSPECTS AND DIRECTIONS

Follow-Up and Evaluation

The fact that few community colleges engage in follow-up studies on students who take part in foreign study programs hinders development of such activities. Community colleges concerned with the continuing evaluation of existing programs, give little attention to the potential for international study. One hastens to call to mind the difficulties encountered in evaluation—per se of study abroad problems so ably dealt with by Professor Allan Pfnister.[2]

Seeking the Best Counsel

Most of the community colleges taking part in the study stated that foreign programs were invariably "organized and administered by the institution in cooperation with private travel agencies." The degree to which instructional needs are met or even voiced under such arrangements is open to question, and

[2]See "The Evaluation of Study Abroad Programs," Allan O. Pfnister, North Central Association Quarterly, and "Evaluation of Undergraduate Programs. In What Way Should Evaluation of Overseas Study Programs Be Included in the Accreditation Process for Colleges and Universities," Allan O. Pfnister Occasional Papers on Undergraduate Study Abroad, Publication No. 15, Council on International Educational Exchange.

this plan seems to explain the decided travel rather than foreign study character of many community college programs. Important here is the apparent impact or influence of the private travel agency on the scope or direction of the college's foreign study operations. The "community" character of the college may well promote the utilization of local businesses which offer such services to high schools and colleges. However, questions may be raised as to why more community colleges do not seek the assistance of any of the major foreign exchange associations (e.g. the Council on International Educational Exchange and the International Institute of Education) which are able to offer assistance in travel questions as well as programming administrative and operational support.

Curricula Review

The financial condition of the student as well as the college may well be the chief consideration in the development and operation of foreign study programs. However, community colleges in general can take encouragement from those few institutions which have faced the problem, and which have developed solutions. Although most American public institutions find it difficult if not impossible to allocate funds for student travel, many items of an "international" character are to be found hidden in the curricula of the school's ongoing instructional efforts. Thus, international efforts, perhaps only a two-week unit on the arts in South America or a one-week unit on the role of

Paris in the world of fashion design, can and should be brought into focus. Foreign study development can then be justified as a viable extension of various established programs.

The Foreign Student as Resource

An increase in foreign student enrollments at American community colleges has not assisted greatly in the development of foreign study opportunities for American students going abroad. There is little planning on a country to country or college-to-college basis, and this lack of formal reciprocity owes much to the fact that American community colleges are without resident living facilities, and are commuter-oriented. In addition, the international study needs of community college students, are better served through brief or short-term programs, and the same cannot be said for foreign students arriving for study in the United States. If the increasing numbers of foreign students at American community colleges render an influence in the future, it will probably be through promoted involvement in campus life. Their increased visibility may well promote more international awareness by causing American instructors to give existing curricula more of an international emphasis.

The College and Developing Nations

It is evident from the survey that community colleges have not given attention to the potential for international programs that could grow out of

commitment to, and involvement with developing nations. Community colleges could do well to begin to identify the possibilities for mutual assistance that would affect both students and faculty, and effect needed changes in curricular offerings.

Two comparatively recent documents provide directions for the American community college in an international context, and these should be appraised for the many perspectives offered. In International Development of the Junior College Idea[3] some of the best "international" articles on junior and community colleges are gathered together, and one cannot read them without viewing possible areas of inter-institutional assistance. In Higher Education and the World,[4] a series of articles provide an overview of international educational prospects and possibilities. Specifically, Raymond E. Schultz[5] considers the challenge for international dimensions in two-year institutions.

[3] International Development of the Junior College Idea, Edited by Roger Varrington, American Association of Junior Colleges, 1970.

[4] National Foreign Policy Conference for Leaders in Higher Education, U. S. Dept. of State, Washington, D.C., 1972. Higher Education and the World Proceedings, Edited by Frank H. Klassen and Raymond E. Schultz.

[5] Ibid., "The Challenge of International Relations to the Community and Junior College," Raymond E. Schultz, p. 36.

Inter-Institutional Cooperation

In view of almost constant economic shocks to most collegiate institutions, and with the proposals made by the Carnegie Commission for more effective use of existing resources, community colleges could do well to consider consortian arrangements for purposes of international study development. It stands to reason that community colleges only a few miles part could reduce operational costs through inter-institutional cooperation. The survey does not show a high frequency of such cooperation.

The Senior Institution Should Not Be Emulated

This researcher is persuaded that community colleges should not attempt to duplicate the types of international programming that are found at senior institutions. Community colleges could be unique in developing useful short-term study experiences, and these might well emphasize career or vocational-technical programs rather than transfer options. The independence of community colleges in international pursuits is not easy to attain, however, and the influence of senior institutional models is ever-present, particularly on community colleges which lack experienced personnel. In addition, American community colleges are often victims of the same type of me-toism which causes so many senior institutions to imitate each other rather than to develop unique programs. In the case of community colleges, there are few models to adopt

from sister institutions, and the move to emulate senior institutions is often injudiciously made.

Transferring the Credit

Few community colleges consider the inherent transferability problems which may arise when a new instructional mode (namely foreign study) is established. Students are plainly done a disservice if existing or projected foreign study courses do not carry the transfer stamp of approval by admissions and instructional staff in receiving institutions. The lack of articulation on this point with receiving institutions may well be the key factor, but there is more that can be done in the planning of the programs themselves.

Advisory Committees

Because there are so many campus sectors "coming at" foreign study development either because of the general excitement raised or because of basic misunderstandings over who should be responsible for what, it would seem that the inauguration of more college-wide advisory committees would be in order. Unlike senior institutions, and those with graduate faculties and research activity, community colleges cannot draw upon a cadre of prepared or active international program personnel.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to provide information on the status quo of foreign study in a large segment of American community colleges. This has

been reasonably accomplished, but much more remains to be done. Hopefully, community college personnel will find the information useful if they are embarking on foreign academic roads and seas. Hopefully, what has been presented will provide some community college personnel with development assistance.

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